

Aymard maintains that important European turning points have always come about as part of an elite phenomenon and that only business has bought whole-heartedly into the Union cause. Todorov analyses the rea-

What is needed now is a new brand of humanism

CULTURE

son for what is still a very transient common identity. And Profumo asks for more cohesion between business and civil society. All three believe that humanistic values must be the basis for the New Europe



Business and intellectuals, two groups that are often distant and at times in conflict, met to examine their contributions to the construction of a Europe that is, at this point, a consolidated reality, but which still lacks a soul. The occasion for this discussion was provided by the meeting between representatives of the Christian Churches and other large religions together with numerous exponents of the world of politics and world culture, organised, as it is every year, last September by the Community of Sant'Egidio. The conference "The Responsibility of Business and Intellectuals in European Construction" was held as part of the initiative "Religions and Culture: The Courage of a New Humanism." A synthesis of the comments made is quoted here. Contributing to the discussion were Maurice Aymard, eminent French historian and Director of the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales; Tzvetan Todorov, Bulgarian critic, historian and philosopher, Research Director of the French CNRS; and Alessandro Profumo, CEO of the UniCredit Group; and moderated by Ferruccio de Bortoli, ex-Editor-in-Chief of the newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, and currently Managing Director of the newspaper *Il Sole-24 Ore*.

**Maurice Aymard:
Europe is no longer just a project**

The process of European unification, begun in the early 1950s and now reaching its conclusion, has not always mobilised hearts and minds. The daily intrigue that has allowed for reaching better or worse compromises is permeated by conflicts of interest and negotiations. Therefore, European insurrections are still suffering from a deficit of democratic agreement. This was seen during the most recent European elections in which high levels of abstention were recorded. However, the progress made in this half century has been spectacular and, above all, I believe it is irreversible. In fact, no country, once it started the process, has ever pulled out. All results achieved are

accepted and quickly become part of our customs and ways of thinking and living. Regarding this, I would like to summarise the progress made, stressing four main points.

Firstly, the increase in the number of countries: united Europe started out with six countries, which became a Europe of 15 countries and today of 25 with the expectation of still other members. For countries like Romania, Bulgaria or Croatia, dates have already been set, for others like Turkey the very criteria are still under discussion, but a favourable decision already seems probable. For still others, like the republics created by the break up of ex-Yugoslavia, the democratic stabilisation of the new regimes is still presented as a prelude necessity. In the end, we will have to resolve the problem of the republics of the ex-Soviet Union, of the community of independent countries to which one day or another the EU will be forced to offer something different from a traditional border: a customs house for merchandise and people's visas. In short, a dynamic has been set in motion. The problem for us today is to understand if it has arrived at its end or if, instead, it can continue in the same direction or on new foundations that must be redefined.

Secondly, we must consider what the European Union is made of. It started out as only the sharing of coal and steel resources to become the free circulation of merchandise and capital, but also people: a freedom that we had lost since the end of the 1800s. Our businesses have rediscovered the very notion of human capital as the basis of their essential richness. What is on the agenda is a Europe of culture and education, the university and scientific and technological research. Hence, we have moved from a limited Europe to a Europe that wants to include all aspects of our lives. Third point: economic and social transformations. The dynamic of European unification has caused the transformation of our old rural societies into industrial and urban societies that in 1968 were defined consumer societies. The most spectacular transformations, but also the least expected, occurred in the Southern European countries: Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece and France. Recently, they have been followed by

_ Business and intellectuals talk together to construct a Europe that can rediscover humanistic values. The debate was between Tzvetan Todorov, Alessandro Profumo, Ferruccio de Bortoli (moderator) and Maurice Aymard.

a few countries from the other peripheries of Europe, like Ireland. We can not help but notice that the European unification process has contributed to bridging part of these differences and reducing them quite noticeably.

The fourth item has to do with the passage from the consolidation of peace to the stabilisation of democracy. The first creators of European construction had in mind the experience of two wars, started as European wars and terminated as world wars, which resulted first in the weakening of the continent and then its division into two blocks controlled by two superpowers. The so-called balance of terror was the only guarantee of peace, a clearly fragile guarantee. The idea at the time was to create the conditions necessary to overcome the rivalry between the European powers to definitively elude the lure of authoritarianism, both of Nazism and Fascism and of Communism in its Soviet and Stalinist version. European unification not only helped existing democracies to overcome the crises that could have put them in danger (the internal separatists in Belgium or in Spain, the decolonisation of France and Portugal, terrorism in Germany, Italy and, to a more limited degree, France). The dynamic of the European unification process also played a part in the fall of the socialist regimes in Eastern Europe and was a fundamental pole of attraction, a reference point, for almost the entirety of the ex-popular democracies except, at least for the moment, for the Republic of the Community of Independent States.

Today we have the impression that the entry of the new EU members has come too late, after too much effort and without conveying clear prospects for the future. European unification is, in fact, a complex process, even more difficult to carry forward now that the number of members has increased. Every important decision, for a long time yet, must be accepted by each of the member countries. The examples of the Schengen agreements or of the Euro remind us that each country intends to continue to progress at its own pace.

Moreover, the process of European construction crosses and interacts with other large processes, first of all, that of globalisation. Also returning to the forefront



are nationalism, local autonomisms and communitarian or religious movements, in other words, fundamentalism and terrorism. They have adapted to globalisation and now programme their actions on an international scale.

The current role of the state, as related to civil society on the one hand, and its relationship to the international picture on the other, is now being called into question. Under discussion are the decisions of two particular categories of social actors which have the means to make themselves heard and which have influence on the public debate: business and intellectuals.

The world of business, like that of the intellectuals, asserted itself as an autonomous force at the end of the 1800s. The process of European unification has led countries to create a new situation that would redefine the relationships between politics and economy and, more generally, between politics and civil society. On one hand, the various Western European countries took on the burden of the majority of public investments made necessary by the transformation of their economies and societies, as well as the equally rising costs of the welfare state. On the other hand, the

“Unification is a challenge that businesses have reacted to by participating actively and positively in the construction of Europe as an economic space and also by redistributing their investments on a European scale.”

creation of a much vaster market led these same countries to give up the tools of verification of their own economies. The Courts of Justice, the European Commission and the Central European Bank defined new rules for production, prices, the circulation of an increasingly vaster number of goods, and the functioning of companies. These organisms did all of this without, however, depending on a State (in the traditional sense of the term), the creation of which – even in the form of a loosely structured confederation – was not even on the agenda. Therefore, a fundamental innovation took place in the field of politics: state powers were limited within a Western Europe that had historically invented and exported to the rest of the world the very principles of the modern state, the sovereignty of its territory and its material and human resources. This political innovation called into question the basic aspects of European political thought, but this new situation did not generate a reorientation of the political debate. The intellectuals continued to take positions on national, international or world issues, but they took little interest in the political implications of European construction. It is true that the political

sciences have had their experts in European issues, but their debates have rarely reached the larger public. We can see this today with reference to the constitution project that will be approved either by the national parliaments or through popular referendums. The European institutions have undoubtedly been responsible in part for this deficit of democratic agreement. Intellectuals have done very little to make up for this deficit, above all because they have never thought of Europe in general terms; they have spoken of the culture of languages, religions, civilisation, of the patrimony of the art of civilisations, but they have never spoken of it in terms of what is at stake for a new political meditation, having as its starting point an inquiry into this fundamental change in the very definition of the politician without endangering the creation, or not, of a European State. The very conditions of the European political decision, an agreement negotiated, often at length, between governments, and the opacity of a bureaucracy that is certainly competent, but totally devoid of contacts with the population, have created the conditions for a Europe that is still not able to define and lead a common policy and, namely, behave like a State in the traditional sense of the term (which it is not yet or which it is not obligatorily destined to become). In short, it seems to me that business has adapted to the new situation better. European unification was surely a sort of challenge for them. It meant the end of the protections that they could benefit from within their respective States, with which they had long learned to converse, but there were also exceptional possibilities for expansion. It seems to me that business has done its part and has actively participated in the construction of Europe as an economic space, a space of circulation and exchange not only of goods, but also of information and people. This economic space has surely gone beyond the hopes of Europe’s founding fathers, not only in terms of increased production, consumption and quality of life or even of unification relative to lifestyles. If we look closely, we see that each country has maintained its specificity, but has also learned to know and better understand the others and to offer them what they desire.

The largest companies have contributed greatly, redistributing their investments and production on a European scale. The result is that today 80% of commercial exchanges take place between European countries, including States like Norway or Switzerland which have chosen to remain outside of the construction, which demonstrates how contagious this dynamic is. The most important fact, as I see it, is that the large European countries have stopped considering each other as competitors and now live as partners. In the early 1960s, the loss of Algeria was presented by many in France as a factor of decline because Germany was their great competitor. Today, Germany has become France and Italy's top partner and France and Italy are each other's second-ranking partner. These are not only numbers, because I am convinced that there is a Europe that has been fully accepted by the majority of the people of our countries and that is no longer just a project.



Tzvetan Todorov: the role of culture in the European construction

By "European construction" I mean the formation and reinforcement of the political entity that reunites 25 European States and that is now called the European Union. That whole, although it has a clear administrative status, for now does not have a strong identity. Many of us are disappointed by this shortcoming, as we are also disappointed by European political men, who seem to be concerned exclusively with the various bureaucratic regulations, without lingering to reflect on the concept itself of European identity.

The thesis that I would like to uphold is that, from my point of view, a European cultural identity does not exist, nor could it. In my opinion, there are three reasons for that absence, which can be summarised as follows: 1. The cultural entity in question is of a smaller dimension than Europe. 2. The cultural entity in question is of a larger dimension than Europe. 3. The European cultural entity is multiple and not single. Let's examine these propositions carefully. First of all, that which we call culture represents an entity of a more contained dimension than that of Europe, being intimately linked to language. In Europe much more than a single language is

spoken. I am aware of the fact that some expressive forms, such as music, dance and image, do not always need linguistic support. What I would like to call attention to is that every human being comes into the world within a certain linguistic context and that language is not a neutral tool, but is impregnated with thoughts, actions and values inherited from the past; it divides the world in a particular way and imperceptibly communicates this vision to us. A child can not help but absorb a way of conceiving the world which, therefore, is passed down from generation to generation. Today, most European cities are an hour or two apart by airplane, you can go from Paris to Milan in a morning. And yet, as soon as you set foot in a different linguistic universe, you discover ways of moving, of organising time and space, in short, ways of living specific to each country. Traditions are much more ingrained than people think and the impermeability of languages contributes to this.

Secondly, on the other hand, culture represents an entity of dimension greater than Europe. Or, if you prefer, culture is a universal entity, therefore, free from all limits. Even in this case, the considerations

“The role of Europe, as a political force, could consist not in the attempt to construct Paradise, but in being satisfied to stop the arrival of Hell. Our cultural tradition should lead us to this.”

to be formulated are clear: European cultural characteristics can also be found outside of Europe and non-European inventions are also available in Europe. It is often claimed, for example, that the novel is a specifically European genre: perhaps a true assertion if applied to the past, but not to the present. It is not possible to think of the novel today without including Russian, Latin-American, North American, or even, more recently, Asian or African literature. The same can be said for painting, philosophy, religion or any other ingredient of culture: that which was born in Europe returns here transformed by the time spent elsewhere. At the same time, Europe hurries to absorb foreign influences and it could not be any other way.

Third point: European culture is multiple. Numerous languages and, as a consequence, various cultures co-exist in Europe. Rather, it is within each tradition that another multiplicity comes to light. Over the course of the centuries, each culture has had time to develop contradictory ideological characteristics. The appeal to faith is European, as moreover, is the appeal to reason. Imperial politics are European, but so is the anti-imperialist struggle. Hierarchical thought as well as

egalitarianism; intolerance as well as tolerance; the revolutionary spirit as well as the reformist spirit: they can all be traced back, fairly, to European traditions.

Which should we choose as our future cultural identity? Whatever decision were to be adopted, it would mutilate the European tradition, betraying it.

On the basis of these reasons, I maintain that it is impossible to have the European identity depend on its cultural traditions. They, apart from the various connotations that they can assume, do not coincide with the European Union and, therefore, do not allow us to delineate its boundaries. A political entity needs borders, a demarcation line that separates its citizens from those who are not its citizens. This is the intrinsic characteristic of every political perspective: diverging from a humanitarian point of view, which is expressed in the name of all human beings, politics are always formed by a group, by a State, by a group of States or by forces within a State. Nonetheless, the political perspective is not incompatible with a humanitarian type of behaviour. Being hospitable, generous or charitable to foreigners does not mean ignoring the difference between citizens and foreigners. A humanitarian point of view outlines a horizon and sets a series of stakes for the political point of view: there are limits that no state reason must ever go beyond. On the other hand, humanitarian action needs a political outline and human rights become a palpable reality when the States themselves take on the burden of their protection, when they also become political rights. Political Europe needs clear borders and culture can not supply them. Who then?

Let us stop for a moment to reflect on the reality of the European Union.

In the first place, the founding countries claim to draw inspiration from the same political project. To be a part of the European Union, a country must embrace the ideal of liberal democracy, have a market economy, be a state of rights, guarantee the protection of the minorities it admits, eliminate every form of discrimination, verify that the separation between Church and State is in force, abolish the death penalty and so on. In addition to the criteria listed above, there must also be geographic continuity. Another similar element, linked at the same time to

geography and demography: the dimension of the States in the Union must remain analogous. For this reason, even if it were to change politically, and despite its cultural importance, Russia could never join the European Union.

In addition to these conditions, I would like to add another one, mentioned less frequently: strategic interest. This lack of attention probably depends on the fact that politicians remain, in most cases, faithful to their national training, without taking into consideration European interests. The question is posed in real terms today, as it is asked if Europe's enlargement to the East, where the continent is not delimited by a sea, must be curbed. In my opinion, it is in the face of this third prospect that it must be decided, for example, whether or not to open the European Union's doors to Turkey or if Europe should accept a country with a Muslim majority population (given that the European Union requires political secularism and not the profession of the Christian religion).

If we adopt this outlook, the crucial question is the following: what type of neighbours should Europe have? In my opinion, political Europe should try to surround itself with States that we could define "in transition": sufficiently close, but, in any case, external. From this point of view, it is in Europe's interest to have Turkey as a neighbour rather than Iran, Iraq or Syria, countries that are much less similar to Europe. And this is what would happen if Turkey became a European Union member. Similarly, further north, the most desirable neighbours would be the Ukraine and Byelorussia, rather than Russia itself. The expression "transition States" could take on another significance: not only countries that separate us from a different world, but also countries with which we sign various agreements and treaties, cultural, legal, economic, but with whom we do not have political integration. Instead, the European Union is destined one day to absorb the other States in European territory, like the Balkans.

A Europe constructed in this way can not assert a simple cultural identity. On the contrary, it can profit from what I would willingly call its political culture. In this case, we are no longer referring to the great writers or painters, but to the maxims of

political action, thought out in Europe, which bear the mark of its geography as well as its history. On a surface comparable in size to that of the United States of America or China, a single State has not been constituted, but a group of about 40 States have been forced to live next to each other. This promiscuity, already mentioned, this plurality of languages, religions, but also of political make-up, has fed countless conflicts and claimed millions of victims. Nevertheless, today we are enjoying its positive effects, represented by the recognition of human diversity, by tolerance for different customs, habits and opinions, and by the refusal to treat each difference in terms of "friend"/"enemy".

As for history, its lessons are obviously numerous, since all of Europe is characterised by long, often sad, experiences of which it preserves the traces, in books as much as in its constructions, perhaps even in its landscapes. What is likely the most important aspect of its political culture derives directly from its history: its choice of secular politics, aimed at keeping the sacred, presently reserved for the private sphere of the individual, rigorously separate from state affairs.

The adoption of this principle is responsible not only for the separation of faith and reason, or of Church and State, but additionally, it puts us on guard against the modern surrogates of ancient beliefs, those political religions that played such a decisive role in the history of the last two centuries in Europe. We know that there was a desire to legitimise the Imperial European projects of the 19th century by maintaining the need to take on a civilisation mission. We also know that the colonisation that resulted from this was violently thrown over by the colonised peoples, who the colonisers thought to improve without considering what the peoples themselves wanted. During the 20th century, political religions have taken on an even more threatening connotation, in the form of communist and fascist States, also conceived as bearers of a mission: imposing the right way of thinking on all citizens and, on all other peoples, submission to an ideological and military guardianship. Europeans have paid a steep price for this confusion and continue to do so indirectly. Therefore, the majority of

“Business and intellectuals must rediscover humanistic values both as the foundation for European construction and for new business. In this way, going toward the economy of knowledge that will dominate the Third Millennium.”



them are fortified against any new idea of mission entrusted to them, like bringing democracy, the market economy and free ventures to all peoples of the earth attached to their missiles and bombs. Because they have done it in the past and have suffered the consequences, Europeans do not confuse the need to defend their own values and territory, even militarily, with the conviction that they must impose the common good on everyone.

The role of political strength, as can be deduced from European history, should consist not in the attempt to build Paradise on earth, but in being satisfied to prevent the coming of Hell. The cultural tradition that propels us along this path deserves to be protected and preferred.

**Alessandro Profumo:
toward the management of knowledge**

The reflection that I am about to make is based on the role played by business in European construction and on how it demonstrates many features analogous to the role of the intellectuals. The competencies of the entrepreneur and the intellectual end up almost fusing in a management model – the management of

knowledge – which is increasingly characterising the economies of the Third Millennium.

We can not consider a company to be something closed unto itself: just the opposite. A company is a living organism that works because of the assistance of the people who work and operate in it every day, thanks to their competencies, their sentiments, their culture. A postulation that is even truer when we reason on a super-national horizon.

The problem of the construction of a new European identity also becomes an essential element for the cultures and modalities of company management.

Different cultures like those that currently cohabit in the new European house require us to acquire capacities normally not present in organisations: the capacity to listen, to include rather than exclude, to integrate instead of disintegrating. This is the important value that this new horizon brings to the company and those of us who attend to business must be prepared. The task is complex. A common culture can not be invented out of thin air, but is created and grows on the basis of vast underlying sharing.

The economy and finance have been able, in recent years, to break down numerous boundaries and to build a union based, largely, on the development of different capacities.

In order for the path of European growth to continue, civil society must also do its part. The world of entrepreneurs, economics, and finance must, therefore, act with the knowledge that common action is necessary, planned with the leaders of the institutional, political, social and cultural worlds.

Our banking group has for some time had this outlook. Today the area of Central-Eastern Europe – that we call New Europe – is already UniCredit's second home market. We believe in this region and in the role that it can play in the construction and integration of Enlarged Europe. In this area, we want to continue to grow, guaranteeing respect for the cultural specificities of the region's countries: harmonious integration does not require colonisation processes.

We must rediscover humanistic values as the foundation not only of European construction, but also of the new business that must prepare itself to act and compete in that Europe.

Technological culture and humanistic culture can and must co-exist. Substantially, everyone is asked to have specialised expertise, but, above all, a very personal ability in offering original and innovative contributions.

Therefore, we need a culture that surpasses individualism and leads toward a totalising consciousness: this is the true concept of humanism. What tools can trigger this process? We must touch our feelings, our emotions, which are the roots of creativity. The figure of the new manager in this sort of "company Renaissance" will be the person who is able to uncover feelings and is capable of rendering the relationship between person and company transitive.

If we want to make progress we must return to making company men reflect on civil value and personal responsibility.

This is essential for the new challenges of the so-called "risk company" that will inevitably characterise Enlarged Europe. Not only an environmental risk, but of the end of many certainties, of the loss of traditions that must not be substituted with new nationalism and new fundamentalism.

We have before us difficult and uncertain times, that we must face with wisdom, equilibrium, creativity and attention to those who each day are building the project of their life and of their work in business and in society.

There is a crisis of life prospects which we all must answer to. A company can make its contribution on the front of responsibility and, therefore, of the integrity of the person and with the person, building economic relations on deep respect for the other.

The market needs a strong culture of rules, of networks, not only economical, but also social, which allow equity, respect for agreements, transparency and honesty to be its basis.

Without these values, the market does not develop and it is illusory to think that it can contribute to the realisation of the objectives of European integration.

For this reason, one of the most urgent tasks, the result of the common effort between business and society, is to build a network of incentives that promote correct behaviours, encouraging the continued emergence of new energies and truly stimulating, without rhetoric, the culture of confidence in legality.

Hence the importance for the governance of social actions in the company, induced by so-called ethical codes, which must be implemented thanks to the propagation of a culture that places personal and behavioural integrity in its centre.

The market can not evade these rules, because it is a decisive component in civil society. Only the individual integrity of the people who make up the company, together with virtuous citizens, can offer a perspective so that this risk company can rediscover a sort of cultural pact of integrity based on the sharing of those moral principles that are the basis for civil life. On this foundation, we must build a new profile of the entrepreneurial and managerial persona, while proceeding in the unstoppable construction of the European community.

Europe is starting to become a world society, with different cultures, with different faiths. Business can call itself responsible if it is able to allow different values, and personal and collective histories live together and to give them the dignity of a coherent life



_ The true European identity will be built up from the bottom. One of the most important aspects of the construction of Europe is the need to integrate rather than standardize (Ferruccio de Bortoli in the photo)

course.

This is the horizon of the ideal of a more civil and civilising market.

Moreover, a new paradigm is becoming popular in companies: obtaining and managing consensus both outside the company, gaining the "trust" of the stakeholders, and within the company, through "values" that can consolidate the various organisational levels. Although the combination of these two fundamental components can have a positive influence on the accumulation and creation of knowledge and, as a consequence, on the success of the company, they are not disclosed on the balance sheet.

What results is the need to link the company's internal reality with the external reality, nourishing a stable relationship with the bearers of interests. To that end, we must increase the flow of information, not only from the company to the stakeholder, but also in the opposite direction.

Entrepreneurs and intellectuals: uniting the two cultures toward the business of knowledge. Culture and business are not as far apart as we tend to think.

Entrepreneurs and intellectuals: it is they who can build the new ruling class. How can this happen? Entrepreneurs are returning not only to the economic scene, but also to the social one. And to survive global competition they must re-evaluate their immaterial assets: knowledge and culture. All without neglecting the rationalisation of production and costs. This is what we will call the "management of knowledge," which generates value through knowledge.

The management of knowledge allows for the generation of value through the making of entrepreneurial decisions based on the use of units of structured knowledge through a process that begins with the individuation of what it is important to know and ends with its efficient use for the generation of value on the business level.

To do this, you must know how to manage the methods of acquiring knowledge: learning, coding, construction, processing and organisation.

In the new global capitalism of knowledge the relationship between intellectuals, entrepreneurs and company managers is essential in order to avoid the poor management of knowledge.

A productive exchange that enables us to avoid poor management of knowledge, interrupting irrational decision-making processes. Factors that would inevitably lead to lost opportunity, meagre acceptance of human resources, and an erroneous or inadequate organisation of activities.

The correct use of the two categories (intellectuals and entrepreneurs) entails obvious advantages: the first being increased efficiency, through the simplification of decision-making processes and organisation, and the optimisation of the correlations between processes and knowledge.

From this point on, the bases can be set down for the company that will dominate the economy of the Third Millennium. It is the economy of knowledge, capable of imprinting companies with flexibility and innovation, supplying solutions compatible with environmental modifications. All this thanks to the development of knowledge, sanctioned by the new pact between entrepreneurs and intellectuals.

The challenge before us is to invent methods for the integration of culture and business, intellectuals and managers, driven by the Renaissance lesson that the hand has never been second to the intellect.